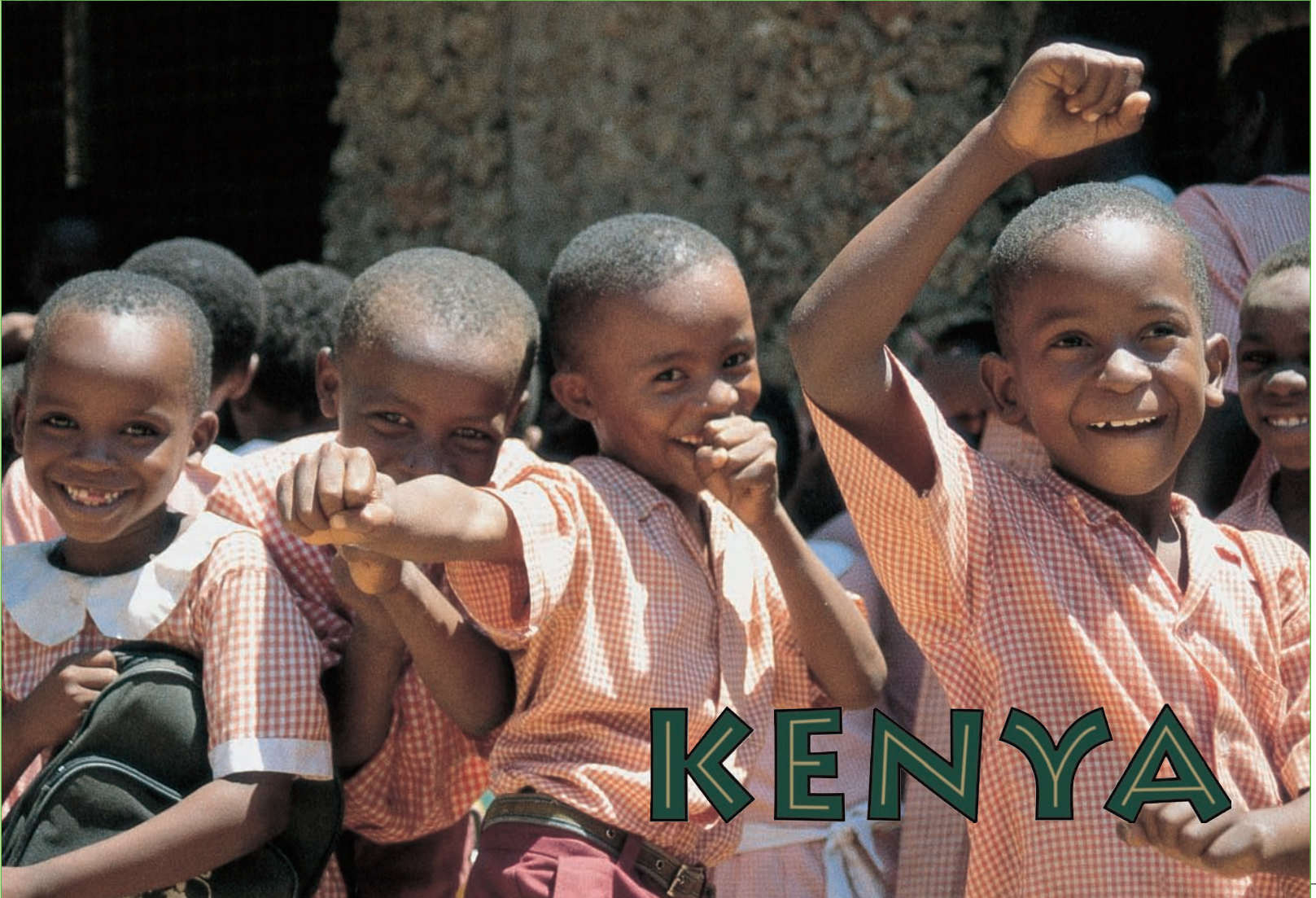


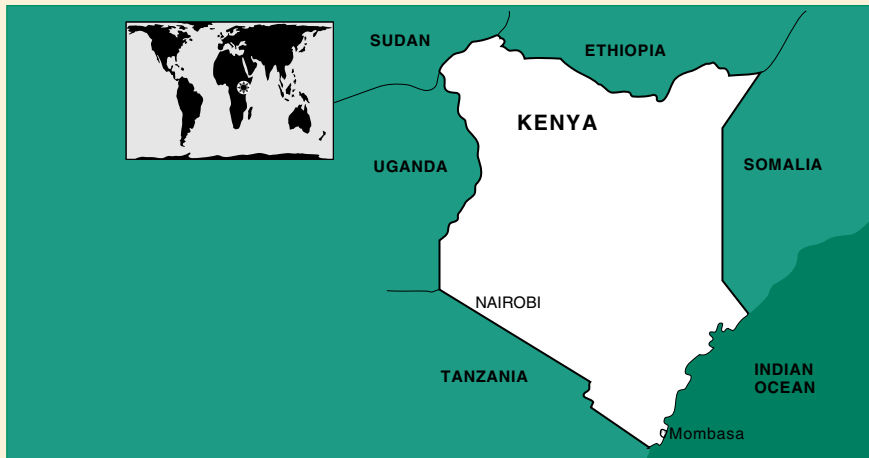
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# Country and community information



# KENYA

# ActionAid in Kenya



## Kenya facts:

- The population is 31.5 million people
- 1 in 9 children dies before they reach their fifth birthday
- Average life expectancy is 45 years
- 43% of people do not have access to clean, safe water

*Kenya is situated on the equator in east Africa and boasts a diverse landscape, which varies from harsh deserts and mountains to stunning coastline. It is one of Africa's largest countries, with a rapidly growing population of 31.5 million people from many different ethnic groups.*

*The economy has been in decline for several years, with high inflation, a weakened local currency and reduced income from coffee and tea – the main export earners. The once highly profitable tourism industry has been damaged by political instability, while unreliable rainy seasons bring the threat of drought and food shortages to many of Kenya's people. These are nationwide problems, but they affect the poorest people most.*

*Kenya has two official languages – English is the main language of business, whilst Kiswahili is*

*widely spoken in the towns and within the National Assembly. More than 40 different languages are spoken across the country. Christianity is the main religion, although there are many Muslim communities in the coastal regions and some people follow traditional beliefs.*

## Making a difference to the poorest people

ActionAid has been working in partnership with some of Kenya's most deprived communities since 1974. We now work with over one million people to help them eradicate poverty from their lives and build a brighter future for themselves. We lobby the government and other decision-makers for changes to the policies and practices that affect the lives of



some of the country's poorest people. ActionAid works through local organisations to ensure changes are long-lasting and relevant to people's needs.

The first stage of any project supported by ActionAid is to work with the community to identify the most important local issues. The next step is planning how best to tackle these problems. Every project we are involved with in Kenya is different, but the main types of work are described below.

## Livelihoods

In areas where ActionAid works, the typical household is made up of eight people. Most families live in mud and grass thatched houses on a small plot of land. The poorest households often depend on the food they can grow – but the land may not belong to them.

The most common crops grown are maize, millet, beans, greengrams, pigeon peas and cow peas. In some areas, cash crops are grown, such as coffee and cotton. A poor household will typically have one or two goats, while wealthier families may keep sheep, goats, cows and hens.

It's a precarious existence, particularly through the 'hungry season' between harvests, when food is scarce and people migrate from rural communities to the towns in search of work.

Some go further afield in search of employment and a better life, with many trying their luck in the capital, Nairobi, and the coastal city of Mombasa. Some families are beginning to look for new ways of making a living, like starting small farms or trading in charcoal, firewood or locally made cosmetics.

ActionAid is teaching farmers new techniques to increase their yield and enable them to grow wider varieties of crops – leading to a more balanced diet for their families. Any spare crops can then be sold at markets to generate income.

However, few families have a reliable income and cash is needed for basics like clothes, schooling, healthcare and the food supplies which they are unable to produce for themselves. Farmers are often forced to borrow from private money-lenders, usually at very high rates of interest.

We are helping villagers establish their own savings and credit groups, which can help people take out loans to invest in their livelihoods, but with fair repayment terms.

***I am so delighted! Thanks to ActionAid, we were able to get seeds for planting. I have already harvested the beans and the maize is doing well.***

***Micah Koech, father of 5, Bomet.***

## Water

One of the biggest problems for many rural communities is finding safe, clean water. The burden of fetching water usually falls on women – taking up to 8 hours a day in some areas. It is collected from rivers during the wet season and from shallow wells, bore-holes and rock pools. Water from rivers and unprotected sources is often contaminated by animals and is a major cause of ill-health. These sources are often a long way from people's homes and may dry up if the rains don't come.

ActionAid is working with communities to provide access to safe, reliable water supplies.

### Water for life

***Safe, clean water nearby can make an enormous difference to people's lives. "I go to bed these days knowing I can sleep soundly without worrying about how early I would have to wake up to start searching for water," says Anastasia Kasokolo of Kasambuya village. Now Mrs Kasokolo can enjoy a full night's rest because she can draw water from a pipe near her home in Ikanga, Kenya.***

## Health

Health facilities are very limited in rural areas. Villagers rely on mobile clinics established by ActionAid or the services of government-owned dispensaries.

With poor health facilities and little health education, even the most common of illnesses become life threatening. Diarrhoea and respiratory infections kill many children and, during the rainy season, malaria is a threat to the whole community.

Building people's understanding of better sanitation and preventing illness is an important, basic first step to improving health. ActionAid trains village health workers in preventative techniques and treatments, while enhancing the skills of traditional midwives. These representatives teach the wider community about the importance of sanitation and immunisation against killer diseases like measles, diphtheria and meningitis.

ActionAid supports mobile clinics, which offer health and nutrition advice to mothers. The clinics visit villages every month, providing immunisation and monitoring the development of young children.

***We are happy now! It's much easier to get treatment without walking long distances and people can cure diseases before it is too late. Rebecca Ouma, a grandmother, Budalangi.***

## Susana's babies

***"In my village, I have assisted in 15 deliveries. All the girls have been named after me while the boys are named after my husband," Susana Munyao from Kyangua village says with pride. In her own right, she has 9 children and 6 grandchildren. She is one of the many Traditional Birth Attendants (midwives) trained by ActionAid.***

## Education

Although there are primary schools in most rural areas, they often lack trained teachers and materials. Primary education is free, but uniforms (which are compulsory), books, maintenance of the classrooms and teacher's accommodation all have to be paid for by the parents. Many of the poorest families can't afford to send their children to school, especially when they are needed at home to work or help with chores.



ActionAid lobbies the Ministry of Education to improve educational facilities in poor communities as part of our ongoing campaign to improve education for adults and children in Kenya.

In addition to this, we are helping to establish classes for adults and children who work during the day. The emphasis is on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills at flexible times in a way that is relevant to students everyday lives.

## Sending children to school

***Mrs Bosone Bidu is 56 years old and is a member of one of the local committees ActionAid is working with in Merti, Kenya. She says, "We are raising funds to build permanent classrooms for our children. We would never have dreamed of starting this before ActionAid trained us".***

## Helping communities to help themselves

Local community involvement is the basis of all our work. We work directly with villagers, village organisations and local representatives, particularly of the poorer households, to be sure we understand local priorities and can offer the right advice and support.

An important element of every project is helping communities to organise groups and management committees who can plan and implement the development initiatives. Through their involvement, the group members develop new skills and acquire knowledge that will be essential to helping them maintain schemes in the future. As representatives of their communities, they are also better equipped and have more confidence to influence local policies and decision making. The overall objective is to build the capacity of community based groups and to develop their potential for a self-sufficient future.

## Hope for the future

***Amina Ilman Giro's husband died last year. Since then, she has worked hard, trading at local markets, to earn enough to send her children to school. She hopes they will have a happy future: "I want to see all of my children finish school and get professional jobs like teaching, nursing or development work – we need people who can organise and work together for the future".***

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, ActionAid is able to do so much to improve the lives of some of the world's poorest families. Since 1972, we've helped millions of people throughout the world, giving them the chance to enjoy a healthier, happier and more dignified future. Kenya is just one of over 40 countries we are working in.

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